
Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
July 23, 24 & 25, 2019, FREDERICTON, NB

Resolution no. 21/2019

TITLE: Support for a Greater Investment into the Reclamation of Childbirth

SUBJECT: Health

MOVED BY: Chief Elaine Johnston, Serpent River First Nation, ON

SECONDED BY: Chief Walter Spence, Fox Lake First Nation, MB

DECISION: Carried by Consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 21(1) Indigenous peoples have the right without discrimination to the improvement of their economic and social conditions including inter alia, in the area of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
 - ii. Article 21(2) States shall take the effective measure and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.
- B. Section 3.2 in the Calls for Justice issued by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls upon all governments to provide adequate, stable, equitable, and ongoing funding for Indigenous-centred and community-based health and wellness services that are accessible and culturally appropriate, and meet the health and wellness needs of Indigenous women, girls, 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (2SLGBTQQA) people. The lack of health and wellness services within Indigenous communities continues to force Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people to relocate in order to access care. Governments must ensure that health and wellness services are available and accessible within Indigenous communities and wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people reside.

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- C. Indigenous midwives assisted in the birthing ceremony for thousands of years.
- D. Colonialism and paternalism, with the ultimate goal of assimilation, led the federal government to undermine all First Nations ceremonies, including birthing and impose a mandatory evacuation policy whereby women were and continue to be forced to leave the community at 36 weeks into the pregnancy to give birth in urban centres.
- E. The effects of this evacuation policy have had devastating consequences on First Nations infant and maternal mortality rates, mental health, infant attachment and bonding, child apprehension rates, and forced and coerced sterilization of vulnerable First Nations women left virtually alone due to these policies.
- F. The revitalization of language and cultural and ceremonial practices are integral to a future of self-determination and healthier communities.
- G. In 2017/2018, the federal government allocated \$6 million over five years for Indigenous midwifery. While this first of its kind announcement was welcomed, this funding is not enough.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Call on the federal government, in the spirit of reconciliation, to work towards replacing the outdated mandatory evacuation policy to ensure that First Nations women are empowered with choice in their birthing process and are supported within their communities to allow for birthing closer to home.
2. Call on the federal government to immediately establish a funding envelop dedicated to training for communities for Indigenous midwives and doulas, to ensure First Nations women are able to reclaim childbirth ceremony within their own communities, surrounded by family and their own traditional cultural practices.
3. Call on the federal government to initiate secure, increased, renewed Indigenous midwifery funding, including capital and infrastructure, beyond the five-year funding which is set to lapse in 2021/2022.
4. Direct the Assembly of First Nations to prioritize midwifery and work with organizations which support choice in birthing, such as the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives (NACM) to raise awareness of the positive impacts of midwifery and create greater opportunities for communities to bring this traditional ceremony back.

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